

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TAGS: PINS, PINT, SHUM, UK, EI
SUBJECT: TERRORIST AND POLITICAL LULL IN NORTHERN IRELAND

REF: BELFAST 061

1. TERRORISTS HAVE BEEN RELATIVELY QUIET IN PAST DAYS,
AND THE LEVEL OF ACRIMONY ON THE POLITICAL SIDE HAS FALLEN,
DESPITE SOME JUICY SUBJECTS.
2. TERRORIST ACTION: SINCE REFTTEL ON MARCH 30, WE RECORD
THREE ATTACKS ON SOLDIERS -- A SOLDIER WOUNDED SERIOUSLY BY
A HIGH VELOCITY SHOT FIRED AT A PATROL IN THE BOGSIDE DISTRICT
OF LONDONDERRY, TWO SOLDIERS SLIGHTLY WOUNDED BY A BLAST BOMB
THROWN AT THEIR VEHICLE IN CENTRAL ULSTER, AND A PREGNANT
WOMAN NARROWLY MISSED BY A BULLET INTENDED FOR AN ARMY PATROL
IN BELFAST. THERE WERE ALSO A FEW MINOR FIRES, A COUPLE OF
KNEE CAPPINGS, SOME ARMED ROBBERIES, AND THE VANDALISM OF A
CATHOLIC CHURCH IN BELFAST. A LOYALIST PARAMILITARY ORGANIZATION
(THE ULSTER VOLUNTEER FORCE) ALSO THREATENED TO STOP FURTHER
CLEARANCE FOR REDEVELOPMENT IN THE BELFAST SHANKILL AREA:
""WAYS AND MEANS WILL BE FOUND TO STOP THE WORK GOING AHEAD.""

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3. POLICE REGISTERED A MAJOR SUCCESS WHEN THEY FOUND AN
AMERICAN-MADE M60 MACHINEGUN DURING A HOUSE SEARCH IN BELFAST.
FORENSIC EXPERTS ARE TRYING TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE GUN WAS
USED IN RECENT ATTACKS.
4. THE NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE ANNO THAT IN THE FIRST
QUARTER OF 1978 31 PEOPLE DIED IN TERRORIST-RELATED INCIDENTS

(INCLUDING THE 12 KILLED BY THE MID-FEBRUARY LA MON FIRE BOMB), COMPARED TO 40 IN THE SAME PERIOD LAST YEAR, AND 98 WERE INJURED (COMPARED TO 400 LAST YEAR). WE NOTE THAT THE NUMBER OF DEATHS THE FIRST QUARTER OF THIS YEAR WAS CONSIDERABLY HIGHER THAN THE PRECEDING QUARTER'S 13.

5. DROP IN POLITICAL ACRIMONY: THE LEVEL OF ACRIMONY IN THE BRITISH-IRISH-NORTHERN IRISH RELATIONSHIP DROPPED NOTABLY FROM THE ROUND OF CAUSTIC CRITICISMS NOT LONG AGO. THERE IS INTEREST IN THE CALLAGHAN-LYNCH MEETING IN COPENHAGEN TODAY (APRIL 7) OR TOMORROW, AND LOCALS REACTED FAVORABLY TO THE IRISH BISHOPS' STATEMENT ON CONTRACEPTION IN THE REPUBLIC (DUBLIN 1139). ON THE THORNY QUESTION OF EXTRADITING TERRORISTS FROM THE SOUTH, TWO CASES THAT WOULD HAVE RAISED CLOUDS OF RHETORIC TWO WEEKS AGO PASSED ALMOST UNNOTICED. THE DUBLIN HIGH COURT REPORTEDLY RELEASED A COUNTY DONEGAL MAN WHO HAD ESCAPED FROM NI'S MAZE PRISON IN MAY 1976, WHEN HE WAS HELD FOR MURDER AND ATTEMPTED MURDER OF NI POLICEMEN. THE MAN SAID THAT IF EXTRADITED HE WOULD BE PROSECUTED FOR A POLITICAL OFFENSE OR AN OFFENSE CONNECTED WITH A POLITICAL OFFENSE. AND A LOCAL PAPER REPORTED OFFICIAL FIGURES ON EXTRADITION REQUESTS: SINCE 1971 NI POLICE MADE 57 REQUESTS FOR EXTRADITION OF TERRORIST SUSPECTS FROM THE REPUBLIC, AND ONLY ONE WAS UPHELD. IN CONTRAST NI COURTS UPHELD 23 OF THE 34 EXTRADITION WARRANTS SUBMITTED FROM THE SOUTH.

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6. CAMPAIGN ON PRISONERS: IT IS GENERALLY BELIEVED HERE THAT THE AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT ON A NOVEMBER 1977 INVESTIGATION WILL ABSOLVE AUTHORITIES FROM CHARGES OF PRISONER ABUSE. PERHAPS AS A COUNTER TO THAT EXPECTATION, THE PROVISIONAL SINN FEIN HAS STEPPED UP THE CAMPAIGN IN FAVOR OF THE 300 OR SO PRISONERS "ON THE BLANKET" IN THE MAZE PRISON -- I.E., CONVICTED TERRORISTS WHO REFUSE TO ACCEPT PRISON DISCIPLINE BECAUSE THEIR SPECIAL STATUS WAS REMOVED OVER TWO YEARS AGO. PRISONERS REPORTEDLY HAVE INCREASED THEIR PROTESTS, AND SINN FEIN HAS TRUMPETED ABUSE ALLEGATIONS, WHICH AUTHORITIES DENY. THE CAMPAIGN SEEMS TO HAVE HAD NO RESONANCE.

7. MOST RECENTLY PROVISIONAL SINN FEIN HAS CHARGED HARASSMENT OF A MEMBER WHO WAS ON HIS WAY TO SPEAK ON PRISON CONDITIONS TO THE NATIONAL UNION OF STUDENTS CONFERENCE.

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